

Justice and Health Care

“Justice, the Basic Social Contract,
and Health Care”: Robert Veatch

The argument

The Egalitarian Principle: A Just society is one where all of its members are as equal as possible in terms of well-being, i.e. happiness (at the very least all people should get an equal chance at achieving the same level of well-being as possible).

Good health, generally, is a necessary condition for well-being.

If large segments of the population are not getting the healthcare they need, while others are, these people are unequal in terms of well-being or a chance at well-being.

They are hindered from achieving happiness while others are not.

So, all people in a society should have access to the health care that they *need*.

For Veatch, where does the ‘egalitarian principle’ derive from?

From Rawls’ Theory of Justice

Rawls’ theory of justice: what many have called the canonical account of what a minimally just society looks like.

Rawls asks, ‘what are the fundamental principles that should govern our actions if a society is going to be one where justice reigns?’

Such principles would stem from the people that will constitute that society. But if the principles are to be just, they must stem from people who are completely *impartial*.

So the principles must come from people who are behind a ‘Veil of Ignorance’.

What is this?

Background

	I violate	I do not violate
I am violated	A	B
I am not violated	C	D

Rawls

The Veil of Ignorance is a hypothetical thought experiment.

It's a way of finding out what justice requires of us in our actions towards our fellow citizens.

Likewise, it's a way of testing the justness of current societies.

What is known behind the Veil:

- Basic human psychology.
- That you are rational
- That once in society you will have a life plan (you just don't know what it will look like)

What is not known behind the Veil:

- Your age, sex, race, talents (abilities), intelligence, beliefs, interests, your social status, what your vocation will be.

Veatch's point derived from Rawls

All people behind the veil will *want*, in so far as its possible, an *equal* chance at well-being: regardless of race, social status, strength, intelligence, and the like.

The egalitarian principle, then, will be a basic principle of justice for the society (society will be structured so as to ensure equality of well-being).

Question: *Would* people behind the Veil want this? why or why not?

Announcements

Paper #2 Topics will be posted by 5pm today.

Reading:

- Peter Singer, *All Animals Are Equal*, pgs 141-148
- Cohen, *The Case for the Use of Animals in Biomedical Research*, pgs., 149-155